GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2204
ANSWERED ON:18.03.2002
CRUELTY TO HORSES
RENUKA CHOWDHURY;SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE

Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the panel of experts set up to go into alleged cruelty to horses for extraction of serum in the Haffkine Institute of Maharashtra has submitted its report.

(b) if so, the details of recommendations thereof; and

(c) the follow-up action taken to implement the same?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI)

(a) Yes Sir.

(b) The details are given in Annexure-I.

(c) The follow-up action taken on the report is indicated in Annexure-II.

ANNEXURE - I

Annexure referred to in reply to part (b) of the Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2204 for 18.3.2002

The CPCSEA panel of experts inspected Haffkine Bio-Pharmaceutical Corporation at Pune (HBCL), Maharashtra on 13th December 2001. The experts panel has made the following observations:

1. The stalls were overcrowded with 3-4 animals in each stall with insufficient protection or cover for the animals.

2. Bedding was not provided in the stables. Stables were not properly cleaned.

3. Disinfectants were not being used.

4. Maintenance and hygiene was extremely poor with stagnating pools of urine / water and uncleaned dung.

5. The overall animal housing was unclean.

6. Water tanks and water troughs in the stables were layered with slime.

7 Cypermethrin (insecticide/pesticide) is being used regularly and casually.

8. Though the sick bay had rooms for 20 animals, only 9 animals were under treatment although several animals needed acute veterinary care.

9. There was no provision of a separate room for treatment of animals.

10. Open paddocks did not have sand baths.

11. Equines are fed a commercial concentrate equine feed 3-4 Kg. per animal daily and 3-4 Kg. of Lucerne per animal daily.

12. No mineral/vitamin supplements are provided. Hay/fodder is given to the animals.

13. Several animals had one or more of the following problem:

i) Conjunctivitis with lacrimation.
ii) Nodular fibrosed swellings on either side of the neck.
iii) Open wounds on legs, shoulder and body.
iv) Swollen fetlock joints and lameness.
v) Debility.
vi) Dull coat and poor skin condition.
vii) Inflamed Knee joints.
viii) Unilateral /bilateral blindness.

14. In defiance to the CPCSEA Protocols, the HBCL continues to immunize and bleed animals including sick, debilitated and lame animals.

15. HBCL continues to bleed 3-4 percent of the total volume of blood over a period of 3 days from the same animal while as per the Protocol two weeks rest is to be given between to bleeds.

16. HBCL continues to bleed injured and blind animals.

17. HBCL continues to use 8-10 gauge needles instead of the recommended 14 gauge needles.

18. Plasmapheresis i.e. mechanical recycling of blood was not being done.

The expert committee made recommendations to scale down the number of horses/mules to a maximum of 200 considering the infrastructure and personnel available at the Institute. They also recommended that Institute be strictly advised to adhere to CPCSEA norms and

ANNEXURE - II

Annexure referred to in reply to part (c) of the Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2204 for 18.3.2002

In compliance to the Hon`ble Supreme Court order dated 3rd December in the case of WP(C)/216/2001 filed by O.P.Tehlan Vs. Union of India, the inspection report of the panel of experts was submitted to the Hon`ble Supreme Court of India.

Having perused the report, the Hon`ble Supreme Court of India on 18/1/2002 directed the CPCSEA to issue notice to HBCL to show cause as to why they should not be directed to discontinue their production of vaccine / serum production in view of the observations made by the Committee.

The CPCSEA Member Secretary in exercise of the powers conferred under Rule - 14 of the Breeding of Experiments on Animal (Control & Supervision) Rules, 1998, asked HBCL to show cause why the registration granted to them should not be revoked. Further under Rule 14 (b) & (c) the HBCL was directed to forthwith cease the drawl of blood from horses for use for manufacture of Anti-Snake Venum Serum (ASVS).HBCL was also requested to inform the date and time of re-inspection in order to verify compliance with the said Protocol and availability of appropriate facilities for the treatment and care of the animals in their Possession.

The HBCL in its reply dated 11th February 2002 has submitted a report to the CPCSEA.They have continued th question the validity of the Protocol in terms of age of equines, bleeding schedule, size of cannula, animal feed & procurement of animals from registered breeders. The applicability of Breeding of and Experiment on Animals (Control and Supervision) Rules, 1998 has been disputed.

It is further added that the HBCL was inspected on several occasions by CPCSEA representatives. Reports of lack of knowledge of accepted standards and procedures for vaccine production, use of over-aged and sick horses, excessive bleeding beyond physiologically accepted limits, inadequate care of stressed, weak and sick animals have been recorded.

During the period between April 2000 to November 2000, i.e. in about 8 months, 84 horses had died. In February 2001,6 horses died. The reasons given by the authorities of HBCL were death due to anaphylactic shock, which indicated the absence of proper protocols for immunization, for monitoring the serum profiles during immunization period and for veterinary care.

Horses that were retired from the Army services due to reasons of old age, unfit for work, were procured by HBCL,Maharashtra. These over-aged horses were all of a sudden pushed into an intensive immunization program, wherein they were given high doses of venom at regular intervals and subsequently bled beyond acceptable limits.

Several of these horses, which were almost spent due to their long service in the army, were subjected to inhumane vaccination schedules and bleeding for example, a horse that died on 30.5.2000 was injected with venom 4 days before its death. The same horse, during the 30 days prior to its death was bled 18 liters of blood. The authorities of HBCL have erected a memorial in memory of a horse that was bled 5000 liters.

O n one occasion, the authorities of HBCL, tocover u p their misdeeds started intimidating the CPCSEArepresentatives. On 23.6.2001, CPCSEA nominee was locked up and beaten up bythe staff of the HBCL. This was an attempt by the HBCLauthorities to prevent inspection using unlawful means. A team comprising of CPCSEAmembers and Expert Consultants visited HBCL the same day and submitted a report confirming the uncompromising and unreasonable attitude of the authorities of HBCL and their use of unlawful means to assault and intimidate the CPCSEA representatives.

The Honourable Minister, Mrs. Maneka Gandhipersonally, along with a team of experts, visited HBCL on 7th August 2001to assess the situation and deliberate upon the unreasonable and uncompromising stand taken by the HBCLauthorities i n implementing the scientifically sound and ethically justified protocols.